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DISCUSSIONS.

“RATIONAL HEDONISM” AGAIN.

IN the recent discussion, in the pages of this JOURNAL, between Professor Mackenzie and Miss E. E. C. Jones, an interesting point has been raised, on which I should like to say one word. The point is the definition of pleasure; in particular, the propriety of Mr. Mackenzie's definition: “pleasure is a sense of value.”* I am unable to accept either Mr. Mackenzie's position or that of Miss Jones; but it is Mr. Mackenzie's phrase I wish to examine, because, while differing from him in this particular, I am in close sympathy with his point of view as a whole (so far as I understand it), and look to him as a doughty leader.

I think the phrase, “pleasure is simply the sense of interest or value for consciousness,” † objectionable chiefly for two reasons.

1. It takes the products of development and ascribes them to the undeveloped consciousness. Mr. Mackenzie denies that “sense of value” implies judgment of value. Yet he remarks that it “is an implicit judgment of value.” The phrase seems, by the use of the word “sense,” to whittle away the idea of judgment very thin (though by the use of the very complex idea of “value,” the wording becomes perplexing), but take the idea of judgment wholly away, and what is left?

The phrase, too, seems to imply a reference to a self. How can there be a “sense of value” without any notion of a self for whom the particular feeling has value? “Value,” too, contains surely the idea of a system or scale of comparative worth, an idea possible enough to a creature conscious of even the most elementary self, but surely wholly impossible to many creatures capable of pleasure, in the sense of agreeable feeling.

2. The phrase defines what is but an aspect of one mental element (feeling) in terms which attribute to it the characteristics of the two other elements (intellect and will). This is apparent from Mr. Mackenzie's own explanation that he meant “implicit judgment” and “unreasoned choice.” Moreover, these explanatory phrases, if they make the original phrase “sense of value”

* Mackenzie, “Manual,” p. 107.

† Ibid., “An Introduction to Social Philosophy,” p. 217.

more acceptable as a definition of the pleasure of the undeveloped consciousness, make it less satisfactory as a definition of the developed ; e.g., the philosopher's pleasure in finding and giving a correct definition.

I am not clear as to the Hedonistic implications which I fear the phrase contains, and shall not therefore urge them. But I would ask, does not Mr. Mackenzie, in the January number of the INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ETHICS, page 222, make "the measurement of value" equal "the measurement of pleasure"? and is that not to adopt the Hedonistic conclusion? In this point and in his distinction between subjective and objective values, Mr. Mackenzie seems to assert that at least the sentient consciousness is Hedonistic. It is difficult to understand "subjective value" as, in any sense in which it does not simply mean "illusion of value," opposed to "objective value," and yet not think of value as pleasure.

It would be interesting to know why Professor Mackenzie declined to follow the lead of Aristotle, Kant, Lotze, and others who have defined pleasure in relation to its conditions. Kant's "Vergnügen ist das Gefühl der Beförderung; Schmerz das einer Hinder-niss des Lebens," * seems to mean very much what I take it Mr. Mackenzie means, but it avoids the difficulties which attach to what Mr. Mackenzie says.

If the Kantian definition be too wide, will not the limitation by Lotze † meet the facts? "If the advantage and harm be momentary and local, the exceptions seem to disappear." ‡

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MR. MACKENZIE'S REPLY.

I find myself in agreement with most of what Miss Gilliland says. I have all along been perfectly well aware that the phrase "sense of value" is open to the objections which she urges. My only defence is, that it is the best phrase I can find. It seems clear that *any* attempt to define so elementary an experience as that of

* Kant, "Anthropologie," Book II., p. 549, ed. Hartenstein.

† Lotze, "Medizinische Psychologie," 1852, pp. 237-239.

‡ Mr. Bradley, "Mind," xiii.